

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6439

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to radiologist assistants.

Brief Description: Concerning radiologist assistants.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Spanel and Berkey).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/21/08, 2/25/08 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Establishes radiologist assistants as a new category of radiologic technologist to be certified by the Department of Health.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barlow, Condotta, DeBolt, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Department of Health (Department) certifies three categories of radiologic technologists: diagnostic radiologic technologists, therapeutic radiologic technologists, and nuclear medicine technologists. Diagnostic radiologic technologists operate X-ray equipment for the application of radiation for diagnostic purposes at the direction of a qualified health care provider. Therapeutic radiologic technologists use radiation-generating equipment for therapeutic purposes at the direction of a qualified health care provider. Both diagnostic and therapeutic

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radiologic technologists may perform parenteral (administered by means other than the digestive tract) procedures, but only under the direct supervision of a physician or osteopathic physician. Nuclear medicine technologists prepare and administer radiopharmaceuticals and perform detection and measurement of radioactivity at the direction of a qualified health care provider.

To become certified in any of the three categories of radiologic technologists, applicants must meet minimum education requirements beyond a high school diploma, which may include a bachelors degree. They must also pass an examination and meet specified clinical supervised experience requirements.

In addition, individuals who apply ionizing radiation, but do not perform parenteral procedures, must be registered as X-ray technicians. X-ray technicians may only practice at the direction of another health care practitioner.

In January 2005 the Department issued a sunrise review that recommended that a new category of advanced practice radiologic technologists, known as radiologist assistants, be regulated by the state. Specifically, the sunrise review found that government regulation of radiologist assistants: (1) is unlikely to cause harm to the public; (2) will ensure professional competence; and (3) is the most cost effective way to regulate the practice of radiologist assistants.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Radiologist assistants are created as a new profession to be certified by the Secretary of Health (Secretary). Radiologist assistants are defined as advanced-level diagnostic radiologic technologists that assist radiologists under supervision as defined by the Secretary. The practice includes performing enteral and parenteral procedures under the direction of a supervising radiologist such as injecting diagnostic agents to non-intravenous sites, performing diagnostic aspirations and localizations, and other invasive procedures.

The Secretary shall issue certificates to practice as a radiologist assistant to applicants who complete an approved radiologist assistant program and an approved examination. All radiologist assistant programs must be approved by the Secretary. The Secretary may recognize organizations that establish standards for radiologist assistant programs.

Diagnostic radiologic technologists, therapeutic radiologic technologists, and nuclear medicine technologists must complete an approved examination to become certified. References to schools of radiologic technology requiring approval by the American Medical Association's Council on Medical Education are removed.

It is unprofessional conduct for X-ray technicians, diagnostic radiologic technologists, therapeutic radiologic technologists, nuclear medicine technologists, and radiologist assistants to interpret images, make diagnoses, prescribe medications or therapies, or perform other procedures prohibited by rule.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The requirement that radiologist assistant programs be recognized by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists is removed and replaced with authority for the Secretary to recognize other organizations that establish standards for radiologist assistant programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The radiologist assistant profession fills a need for services between a radiologic technologist and a radiologist. This is an efficient way to improve delivery of care in both urban and rural environments. Mid-level radiologic practitioners make a significant difference in patient care and access to critical radiologic diagnosis. This bill is consistent with a 2005 Department of Health sunrise review that recommended regulation of radiologist assistants.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Jeff Choffel and Scott Harrison, Washington State Radiological Society; and Laurie Jenkins, Department of Health.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.